



Christian Courier

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Reform plans tough measures against crime



Preston Manning in St. Catharines, with local Reform Party member Kristen Schmalz

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The Reform Party has developed a package of changes to Canada's justice system which it wants to put on the national agenda. A referendum on capital punishment, a tougher Young Offenders Act and changes to Canada's gun laws are among the ideas the party proposes.

One of the greatest fears of

Reform MP Garry Breitkreuz. "The guilty party should be required to financially compensate the victim."

On the issue of capital punishment, Manning says, "Whether to grant the government the right to take a life for the purpose of saving other lives is a moral and ethical decision that Canadians should make for themselves. Politicians ... should leave the final choice up to the people."

Want death penalty referendum

The Reform Party is asking the federal government to hold a referendum on the death penalty at the time of the next federal election. In a newsletter dealing with this issue, the party cites statistics from a recent Angus Reid poll that show 44 per cent of Canadians strongly support the death penalty, with another 25 per cent showing moderate support. The June 1995 poll shows 18 per cent of respondents strongly opposing the death penalty and 11 per cent moderately opposing it.

Canadians is that "something bad and violent will happen to their loved ones," said Reform Party leader Preston Manning in a recent speech to party supporters in St. Catharines, Ont. The government has a major responsibility to protect the lives and property of its citizens, he said.

Manning criticizes the Liberal government's approach to justice. "Thanks to the Liberal approach, the scales of justice are tipped in favor of the criminals. Criminals don't respect the law and are not responsible to society."

Instead, his party is asking the justice system to focus on protecting and serving the rights of victims.

"Victims need to be given open access to the offender's parole hearings and the right to give input to hearings," says

Rick Prashaw of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) believes that a referendum on capital punishment is a bad idea. "I would question the expense behind a referendum," he says. Ten years ago, the House of Commons held a vote on capital punishment and agreed to continue opposing it. At that time there were many community and church meetings to discuss this issue, says Prashaw.

Young Offenders Act needs fixing

The Reform Party has cited examples like the recent Bernardo case as reasons to support a death penalty, but Prashaw comments, "It's very difficult to base law on exceptional cases." CCJC is against capital punishment.

Canada's Young Offenders Act needs to be strengthened, according to Reform Party members. "Young people think the Young Offenders Act is a joke," says Reform MP Diane Ablonczy. "Victims of young offenders think it's a travesty. Adult criminals who use young offenders to commit their crimes think the YOA is a gift from the government."

The party is calling for stronger sentences for young offenders and trial in adult court for older youths and serious offenders. The party wants to lower the minimum age of a young offender from 12 to 10 years old and wants 16- and 17-year-olds to be tried as adult offenders. The identities of young offenders should be made

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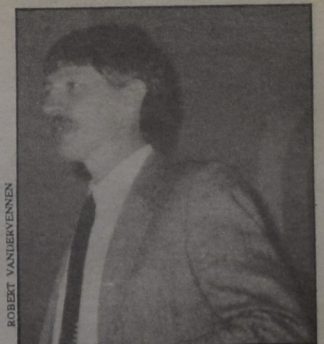
Economic conference calls for discernment in hard times

Robert VanderVennen

LONDON, Ont. — "Economic turmoil is felt all around us," says an invitation to a two-day conference titled "Economic Discernment: A Practical Exercise in Spiritual Discernment for the Canadian Church" sponsored by the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada.

How are Christians to respond to the budget cuts by governments, and a meanness of spirit that seems to go with the cuts? We need to understand God's norms for economic life and how to apply them today when governments have built up huge debts, said the conference speakers.

The conference, chaired by Harry Kits of Citizens for Public Justice, started with a picture of human life among people in the front lines of coping with today's hard times. A video showed poor people in



John Hiemstra

Toronto's Regent Park area who want work, not welfare. Then Gerry Kassies spoke about his experiences as an accountant being declared "redundant" and his struggle to find another job.

Art DeGroot talked about running his small business in Sarnia in the face of pressures from big business and from

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News

Material goods can become an idol

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customers who press him to be part of the underground cash economy.

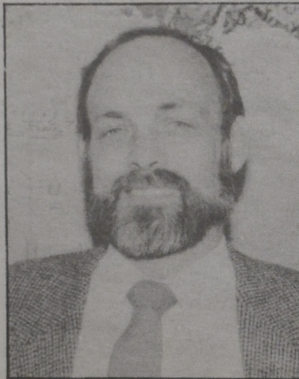
Material goods are gifts of God, said John Hiemstra of The King's University College, Edmonton, in his keynote address. But to be obsessed by them is to be led by an idol, and the prophet Jeremiah warns us that idols speak false words like "cut welfare" and "ignore the environment." God calls us to say "enough," which he makes concrete in his sabbath laws designed to help the poor. We need to ask what kinds of spirits are behind our use of resources.

The last year the federal government balanced the budget was 1970, said Hiemstra, a time when the federal debt was \$1.8 billion. Then Trudeau brought in new and broadened social programs so the poor would have money to stimulate the economy, and started government-financed mega-projects, high government spending and low taxes.

Then in 1984 Mulroney brought tax cuts and the debt ballooned to the point where today it stands at \$550 billion, and almost one-third of government expenditures pay for interest on the debt. Today the 20 per cent of Canadians with lowest incomes earn less than one per cent of earnings brought home by Canadians.

Treasurer Paul Martin has admitted that spending for social programs will soon be at their lowest level since the 1950s.

Ray Elgersma of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee cautioned that corporations can disempower governments because they have



Ray Elgersma

much more money to spend. He called for a one-half per cent tax on Canada's part in the \$1.5 billion in currency that changes hands between speculators every day, and tighter regulation of financial institutions.

To show how badly priorities are misplaced, Elgersma said that each year, Michael Jordan is paid \$20 million to promote Nike shoes, while less than that is paid to all the people in poor countries who make the shoes.

Hank Kuntz of the Christian Labour Association of Canada said that the Ontario government has promised a 30 per cent tax cut. "I don't want it — give it to the poor," said Kuntz. We need more individual responsibility and less government, he added.

Economic discernment a gift of the Spirit

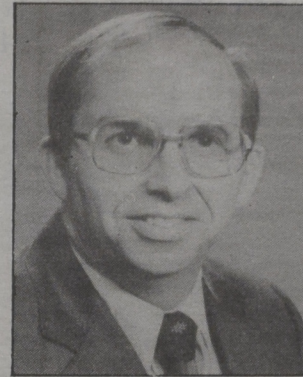
In her workshop on "The Future of Social Security" Stephanie Baker Collins of Citizens for Public Justice echoed the need for economic discernment, which she said is a gift of the Holy Spirit rooted in the social concerns of the Old Testament prophets.

The structures of society, as well as our individual lives, need to reflect our Christian calling as image bearers of God and our calling to be neighbors and stewards. Economic policy is only one part of social policy but it seems to run social policy, Baker Collins said.

She sees a dramatic shift in public attitudes toward the poor, along with reorientation of support programs for poor people. People are afraid that the social safety net has become a "safety hammock." There is call for people on welfare to work, without general recognition that it is more costly to arrange and administer than simply to mail a welfare cheque.

The welfare system needs reform, not across-the-board cuts. Churches are pressured to help the poor, and their response will itself bring a kind of reform to the system.

Dutch Reformed people are very self-reliant, always able to get a job and impatient with the



Elbert Van Donkersgoed

unemployed. But today people in our own church can't find work — the poor are now right among us. Yet today, even among church members, a mean spirit is developing toward the poor in our society, says Baker Collins.

Fewer jobs for the unemployed

But there are fewer jobs today, and the nature of work is changing dramatically, said El-

bert Van Donkersgoed of Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. Pressure on businesses for higher profits and greater productivity cuts the number of jobs.

Creation of wealth through work is not going to increase. Though the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is increasing, individual income is decreasing. The population has grown exponentially in the past 200 years, and since World War II women have entered the workforce in great numbers. There's no longer room in the workplace for everyone, and not enough jobs either for "workfare" programs.

Work is more than a way to get money — it's a way of life, he said. Shortage of jobs is especially hard on young families, since the good jobs are largely held by people in their 40s and 50s. We see growth in the secondary economy, as in the new technology, and in people exchanging skilled work with friends.

In her workshop on "The Biblical Basis of Stewardship," Barb Hoekstra of Christian Stewardship Services asked what effects the philosophies of consumerism and naturalism have on good stewardship. She examined biblical texts and affirmed that stewardship includes our use of time and talent as well as money.

Pre-council conference urges stewardly steps

Robert VanderVennen

LONDON, Ont. — While the first part of the November 10-11 economic conference sponsored by the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada focused on the idolatry that has led to tough economic times, the second part addressed possible healing opportunities.

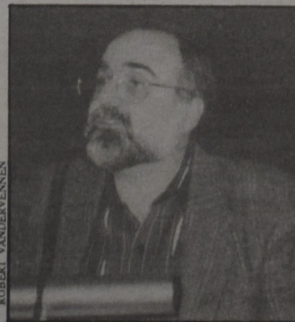
Churches should be active in helping people with spiritual discernment amid today's economic turmoil, several speakers pointed out. Preaching should accent good stewardship.

Heather Johnston urged that we look closely at how we invest in people. The World Bank is very careful how it invests, and there are many people it won't invest in, but its repayment rate is only 38 per cent.

She held up the work of the

Economic Development Co-operative Societies, whose head office is in the Netherlands, which invests in the work of poor people who don't have much collateral, but whose repayment rate is above 80 per cent. The co-operative societies invest only in ecologically sound projects by groups that include both women and men. Investors get a lower rate of return, but unlike many World Bank projects, these projects consistently benefit local economies and people who badly need capital funds. Johnston encouraged churches to consider such projects for their invested funds.

Mark Vander Vennen called for preaching on the concept of "jubilee," which he said is central in the ministry of Jesus.



Ray Hodgson

He also noted that small-group discussion can help people understand the spirits at work in today's economic turmoil.

The final presentations pointed out other healing opportunities. Ray Hodgson said that the Taskforce on Churches and Corporate Responsibility fol-

lows church endowment and pension investments by urging corporations toward good ecological practices and accountability to shareholders.

John Vander Meulen talked about the helpful activity of deacons in northern Alberta. Ida Kaastra Mutoigo promoted the new ServiceLink program in which she co-ordinates the services of volunteers. Mike Hogeterp described a Toolbox for Political Action he developed with Lorraine Land at Citizens for Public Justice.

Mark Vander Vennen recommended constructive steps identified in a book he recently translated from the Dutch and edited. The book, called *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Towards a Canadian Economy of Care*, was written by Bob Goud-

zwaard and Harry de Lange.

The poor have much to give, said VanderVennen, and we should make room for them to make their important social contributions. We should try to prevent the marketization of life.

From mammon to stewardship

Turning away from mammon to stewardship calls for structural change, concluded John Hiemstra of The King's University College. Profit margins need to take into account the ways the companies use their workers and the environment. Governments may not be left off the hook. All of us need to confess how we've participated in the idolatry of our time.

Politics/News

Liberalism no cure for nationalism

Is political liberalism's emphasis on individual rights adequate to protect the rights of minority communities? The question is of particular importance here in Canada, given the existence of a rather large contingent of French-speaking citizens concentrated in the province of Quebec. With some exceptions, this community sees itself as a nation in every sense the equal of a supposed Anglo-Canadian nation, despite its minority status in Canada as a whole.

Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who remained conspicuously silent during the referendum campaign, is a long-time supporter of liberal ideology, whose precepts he incorporated into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. For him and his fellow liberals, any attempt to accommodate Quebec nationalists by granting their government powers to protect the distinct society of that province is an assault on the hallowed rights of the individual. As soon as Quebec is given more powers than other provinces, the rights of individuals become unequal and are protected to varying degrees from one part of Canada to the next. This is something liberals cannot tolerate.

POLITICS

David Koyzis



Can't account for community

I am no friend of nationalism, particularly of the ethnic variety. I've seen what nationalism has done to my father's native island of Cyprus, where longstanding efforts to unite it with Greece eventually led to its forcible partition at the hands of the Turkish army. Ethnic nationalism is further fragmenting the Balkans and the Caucasus, leading to the horrors of ethnic cleansing and intercommunal bloodletting.

But liberal individualism is not the answer. In fact, I believe it is part of the problem. Canada is being torn apart, not simply because of nationalist demands, but because liberalism is basically unable to account for the legitimate claims of community in the political sphere.

If the majority of Quebecois believe themselves to be a nation, simply handing them the Charter and telling them to be content with their rights as individual citizens will hardly be enough. It will not address communal fears of assimilation into the anglophone majority. Nor will it be able to speak to the sense of historical injustice shared by many Quebecois. In fact, it is likely to be viewed as anglophone hegemony, and will push them into the arms of Bouchard and the PQ.

Dismemberment by two ideologies

Canada, in short, is being dismembered by two contesting ideologies. Liberalism is dominant in English Canada, notwithstanding the existence of Tory conservatism and socialism as minority viewpoints. Nationalism is the primary ideology in Quebec, even among members of the provincial Liberal Party. Given the stubbornness of the followers of these ideologies, it is hardly surprising that recent attempts to articulate a constitutional package acceptable to both have repeatedly been frustrated.

What approach shall we take as Christians? There can be no doubt that nationalism is a destructive force which we must oppose. But we do not combat one form of idolatry by embracing another. As anglophone Christians we may be tempted to use the weapons of Athens to battle Babylon, but if we do so we had better be prepared for the possibility, not only that we will inadvertently strengthen Babylon, but that those very weapons will double back and injure us in the process.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont., where all the faculty are strong, all the staff good-looking, and all the students above average.

Reform's ideas would raise cost of prisons

...continued from page 1
public, except in the case of very young offenders.

According to Manning, most of the young people he speaks with at schools ask for a tightened-up young offenders act, partly because many young people become victims of other young people.

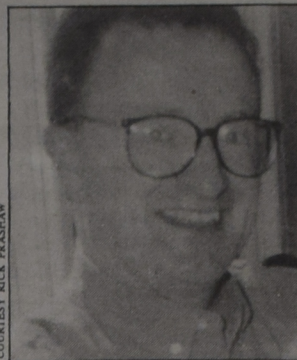
Commenting on these ideas, Prashaw says, "I think that the measures [Manning] is proposing are largely ineffective. (They) might make Canadians feel better but it doesn't make for a safer country."

Reform's proposed changes to the Young Offender's Act would put more people in prisons and raise the cost of imprisonment. A better approach would be to get to the roots of the problem of youth crime, says Prashaw. He says spending more money on daycare and school breakfast programs which focus on making children as healthy as possible would create "a direct link on later levels of crime."

Prashaw says the identities of young offenders should not be revealed, except in a limited way. For instance, local school authorities could be told if a young offender moved into the neighborhood. If the identity of young offenders is revealed completely, "it would be to their and society's detriment," says Prashaw. One reason for this is that in adult years former young offenders would be identified with their earlier crimes.

No plea-bargains

Manning and the Reform Party have also called for an end to the use of plea-bargaining by police in cases such as Karla Homolka's. This statement drew applause from Manning's St. Catharines audience.



Rick Prashaw

Reform also wants to depoliticize parole boards. Art Hanger, a Reform MP and former police officer, comments, "Parole board members and judges must be hired on their merit, not on their connection to a political party. They must be held accountable when criminals are let loose and commit crimes."

The party calls for violent criminals to serve their full sentences with no possibility of parole and wants "lifetime parole" for them after their release from prison. Prashaw criticizes the lifetime parole idea as being "a wide, sweeping measure. Most people who are on parole do not violate their parole." Instead, he suggests parole boards make parole decisions "on an individual,

case-by-case basis."

But Prashaw says there is merit in Reform's recommendations that there be more community representation on parole boards. He defends the parole system, which, he says, has successful reintegration of offenders into society at its heart.

Don't like gun registry

On the issue of gun control, Reform criticizes the Liberal government's recent gun law, especially because of the firearms registry, which the party estimates will cost \$500 million. Instead, the party wants a "zero tolerance" gun control law that has strong penalties for the use of a gun for criminal purposes but protects the right of "law-abiding citizens" to own and use guns.

CCJC supports the present gun control laws and the gun registry. "Registration is so much a part of our lives," says Prashaw, mentioning registering of car ownership as an example. He adds that he didn't hear a lot of alternatives to the present gun law from the Reform Party.

Although CCJC is critical of some of Reform's ideas on changing the justice system, Prashaw says, "There is respect by the Church Council for their taking these issues seriously. We're not questioning their concern."

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Calendar of
Events, please
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Editorial

Why the Bernardo house had to be leveled

This week the city of St. Catharines tore down the house in which Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka committed their horrible crimes against at least two teenage girls. I could have gone there to take a picture for the readers of CC. But I decided against it. It's hard to know at what point we are truly appalled by evil or fascinated by it.

Perhaps I live in the vain hope that one editorial is worth a 1,000 pictures. Besides, I argued, other news media would be there to distribute the images throughout the country. Like an orthodox Jew who asks a gentile to light the stove for him on the Sabbath, I decided to stay pure.

The idea of getting rid of a building that has no will and no conscience, and consequently cannot be considered guilty of any crime, is worth reflecting on, however. Why did this perfectly good and lovely Cape Cod-style house

have to go? Not only did the above-ground structure have to go, but the contents, the basement and the sidewalks leading to the house were trucked away and buried. The day before, Bernardo's Nissan had been taken from the garage and shredded somewhere. Not a trace of anything that could be identified with the crimes was left, except two bunches of flowers lying on an empty plot of soil.

For the sake of memory

There are a number of good reasons for getting rid of it all. The house and its contents were under a curse. And they were under a curse because human beings have memories. No one would ever forget what took place inside 57 Bayview Ave. Who would want to live in such a house? Vandals and tourists certainly did nothing to erase the memory.

The building was erased for the same reason that other buildings with good memories are preserved. We need to surround ourselves with things that inspire us rather than with things that demoralize us.

Come to think of it, there is not a building on this earth that is not tainted with sin. The only reason we don't bulldoze every single one of them is because we tolerate certain sins, because we don't know what goes on in each building,

and because we can't afford to keep on rebuilding our homes and work places every time a sin is committed.

God's memory

But God has a different perspective on these things. One day he's going to destroy everything on this earth that has been polluted and cursed by our sinful actions. God has a memory, too. And that memory is all-knowing and all-encompassing. For the same reason that the Bernardo house was totally eradicated, my home and your home will some day be eradicated because of what we did inside those four walls.

Of course, God has another way of erasing sin and the memory of it. He sent his only Son to earth to face total eradication on our behalf. Now that's a humbling thought, isn't it? God does not and never will take sin lightly. That's because sin is destructive, no matter how small the sin may seem to us. That's what Christmas is about: the beginning of the eradication of sin.

The empty lot with two bunches of flowers on Bayview Ave. in St. Catharines is like the follow-up of Christmas talked about in Revelation 21: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." **BW**

Christian Courier

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The strange game of politics

It seems that the federal Liberals have quietly (surreptitiously?) changed Canada's coat of arms. And the Reform Party is livid, because they see it as one more sign of high-handedness on the part of the government.

The change in the coat of arms, which was approved by the Queen on July 12, 1994, but never debated in Parliament, involves the addition of a red ribbon in the centre bearing the Latin words *Desiderantes Meliorum Patriam*, ("They desire a better country").

According to Liberal backbencher Patrick

Gagnon, one of the sponsors of the new arms, the old coat of arms was too closely associated with the British. He did not explain how the addition of a Latin phrase would make it more acceptable to French-Canadians.

If one didn't know that the phrase comes from Hebrews 11:16 and that it refers to a desire for heaven, one might be excused for thinking that it encourages separatist sentiments in Quebec. Just think, Lucien Bouchard making an appeal in the near future to the new coat of arms of Canada: We desire a better country! **BW**

Bad news? Not necessarily

As I was driving to work this morning I stopped behind a car sporting several bumper stickers. One of them read: "My karma just ran over your dogma."

I smiled as I caught the first level of meaning in this attempt at humor. But as I drove on, I wondered if there was more to the sticker than just a cute way of saying that my car just ran over your dog.

Did the statement emerge in a friendly inter-religious discussion? I wondered. And did one participant say to another: "My Hinduism just defeated your Christianity?" Or could the

originator of the saying have been a woman telling her husband who was bolting down a piece of French toast that her warm feelings were more valid than his cold logic?

Then a new feeling/thought struck me. Maybe I should combine the whole shebang and think that a warm, sensitive Hindu woman had just run over my rationalistic Christian dog? Well, if that's the case, there's no need to mourn, I said to myself. A cold, rationalistic Christian dog deserves to die.

Oh, what a beautiful morning! **BW**

Letters

What I didn't learn from the liberation celebration

In the wake of the 50th Anniversary celebrations marking the end of WWII, it is good and right to ask: What did I learn from these events?

To be sure, there was certainly cause for celebration. To be freed from the tyranny of Nazi occupation is noteworthy. Thanks should, of course, be given for those who gave several years of their lives fighting for freedom. And to remember those who died for the cause of freedom is noble. But, what did I learn?

Being a post-war baby, I did not experience the war first hand. I heard numerous stories of men and women who risked their lives hiding Jews; stories of how people in the Resistance were found and shot in front of family members and neighbors; stories of bitter cold and starvation, something I can't begin to imagine; stories of how planes were overhead and tanks all around and soldiers intruded at all times. Nauseating to think about. But what can and must I learn from it all?

Why did it happen?

Often I hear the words "Never again." Can we be sure of that? Seldom in any media coverage do we hear what caused the Second World War.

Do the veterans begin the story with the Nazi ideology that began years before? How Hitler and others longed

for a Utopian society? Do we hear that Germany had no room for the disabled, the old, the imperfect? Do they tell us how Germany's first desire was to make certain municipalities "Jew-free," then to "encourage" emigration, then to force Jews to live in ghetto-style poverty? From there it degenerated to full scale murder. Why? We have to know so we can be sure that it won't happen again.

Post-Christian era

Or is it already happening? Abortion for genetic defects is occurring at an alarming rate. Abortion for sex selection is becoming increasingly popular. Euthanasia is already practised. Governments are removing the rights of parents to raise their children according to their consciences. As a society we have left Almighty God out of our lives. We are living in a post-Christian era.

In Joshua 4, after Israel crossed the Jordan, they set up 12 stones as a memorial. This was done so that when their children asked, "What do these stones mean?" their parents would tell them (vs.24). So when we have these celebrations, you who were there, make sure you tell us the whole story, not just the emotional, subjective details.

I have been told that it is "inexcusable" to be blasé about the liberation celebrations. Yet those making this statement neglect the rise up in holy anger

against the assault today on Judeo-Christian principles. One in 20 Canadian soldiers never returned from WWII. One in two babies never see the light of day. Make no mistake about it, the war is still

going on. May we be found faithful.

We must learn from history, not idolize it.

Eric Hartemink
Belmont, Ont.

Church may have to return to Acts 6:3 mentality

Your front-page story on Rabbi Dow Marmur's speech (Nov. 17) joins the media all across Ontario in bashing the Conservative government for its "Common Sense Revolution." Nobody really likes to cut back, and it hurts us when it hits the poor and the disadvantaged. But have we in Ontario already forgotten that it was only earlier this year that we elected this government?

Have we considered the consequences if we had re-elected the NDP? Even the NDP recognized that there had to be cut-backs. Have we taken note of the fact that, so far, the Harris government has done what it promised it would do?

Yes, Harris slashed welfare benefits over 21 per cent and now I read a report on a study by Prof. C. Sarlo from the University College of Nipissing on how much it takes for a welfare recipient to have shelter and food and clothing. The end result is that, even after these cut-backs, Ontario welfare recipients receive generous handouts from the government — still the highest benefit levels in the country. Many of us have heard stories of welfare recipients not wanting to work for a minimum wage because that would reduce their income too much.

Mr. Gerald VandeZande does not know how to help the poor other than by rallying to their side to join the war against the Conservative government. We must pray for our government members that God may give them wisdom.

Would like visionary follow-up

The article by Anthony Looy *Lament for Two Nations* (CC, Nov. 17) provided helpful background information, especially for those of us south of the border who seldom see or hear such reports on Canada in our media.

I was sorry that the article ended by telling how negative both sides were and how such occasions as Meech Lake were bungled. Would a follow-up article with some visionary possibilities for the future be in place? After Dr. Looy has settled down a bit in Edmonton perhaps he could have a go at it.

Bert den Boggende
Fairview, Alta.

John Van Schepen
Bellflower, Calif.

As individuals who are well-to-do, we should give more support to agencies which assist the needy. We should help a poor neighbor when we see one. This time may well be the time that God wants the churches to revive their diaconates to look for the poor and help them. I believe that in the past 30 years governments have taken over the task from the deacons. Here is our opportunity to reclaim that task.

The history of Acts 6:3 may have to be repeated. But wouldn't that be nice?

Jack DeVries
St. Thomas, Ont.

We need a better understanding of office and laity

Church historians have often emphasized the importance of the development of the early church's hierarchical form of church government. Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars may have different views about that development, but they generally agree about its importance.

Not surprisingly, when I was asked last year to lead a Sunday school program on church history I, too, emphasized that development. In addition, I tried to indicate the diversity of the early church, including the position of women. During the last decade or so much more has become known about women's roles in the early church, thanks largely to women historians.

Hierarchy vs. women

At the end of the program I began to realize that I had not adequately connected the hierarchical development and the declining roles of women in the church. I suspect that the proper connection should be made through the obverse of the hierarchical development.

The Christian Reformed Church has been struggling with the issue of women in office. Perhaps we should be struggling with the issue of office or, better

even, with laity. Church historians have generally been fairly quiet about this development, but unless we get the issue of the laity properly worked out, it seems to me that we won't get the issue of women in office harmoniously worked out.

While the Reformation broke with much of the hierarchical form of government, it did not adequately develop the role of the laity. All too often we still ascribe to a minister a nearly papal role. As R. Paul Stevens has pointed out, the early church, as it were, abolished the laity. CRC members would do well to read his article "On the Abolition of God" (*CRUX*, June 1995, 31:2, pp.5-14). One does not have to agree with all of Stevens's ideas, but his article is a good start for obtaining a biblical understanding of the laity.

This suggestion is not made to turn the sometimes acrimonious debate about ordaining women into an acrimonious debate about laity and office. I hope that with a better understanding of the role of the laity, we will get a better understanding of the role of women in a contemporary church.

Broken

*The yolk is gone.
All that remains
Is a broken shell.
Fragmented into tiny bits
The pieces will never fit again.*

*The reed is bruised.
The stem has cracked
In various places.
Hanging dejectedly downward,
It will never heal again.*

*The oak has fallen
split right into half.
Lightning has struck it...
Uprooted, the once mighty oak
Will never grow again.*

*The bird is dead.
Carved by the cat.
Along the roadside...
A beak, feathers, a pool of blood.
It will never chirp again.*

*The child is hurt.
Agonizing.
Battered and bruised...
Tormented by one she trusted.
Will she heal again?*

*Eggs, reeds, oaks and birds
Are replaceable.
They have no souls.
However,
A vulnerable, little child
Is scarred forever.*

Debbie Davis
Hamilton, Ont.

Opinion

'I believe... he was born of the Virgin Mary': *implausible or miraculous?*

John Valk

Nativity scenes have sprung up again around our cities. Once more the words ring out: *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Immanuel* (Matt. 1:23). For many these are comforting and hopeful words.

For others, such words pose a question, or even a problem. Was Jesus indeed conceived by an act of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35)? Or must we admit that (historically and biologically) Jesus was really conceived through (normal) sexual relations between a man and a woman? Can historical fact and theological idea really intersect? These questions have entertained, even perplexed, many theologians, biblical scholars, historians, and even pondering church attenders.

Insisting on logical human answers

Some argue that the "Infancy Narratives" have their basis in pagan divine-birth stories. These stories speak of some form of divine marriage, a god mating with a human woman to produce divine/human beings. Such arguments, however, are weak when applied to the Gospels. These speak about a

conception by the Holy Spirit without any form of intercourse.

It is also argued that a virginal conception is really a distortion and a mask. Behind it lies an illegitimate birth, possibly the result of rape (Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*). In the second century Celsus wrote about adultery. In *True Discourse* (178 AD), a polemic against Christianity, he claims that Mary had an affair with a soldier named Panthera. Celsus based this on stories told in some Jewish circles about a Jesus ben Panthera.

Others argue that a virginal conception is largely a theological idea, without basis in historical fact. While the Hebrew and Greek words used in the texts strongly suggest virginal conception, the evidence is not conclusive. The Hebrew word *almah*, used in connection with Isaiah 7:14, refers to a young woman of marriageable age where virginity is implied, yet it is not a technical term for *virgo intacta* (*betula* Heb). The Greek word *parthenos* (girl, young woman) seems to strongly imply one who is a virgin, yet this may not always be the case.

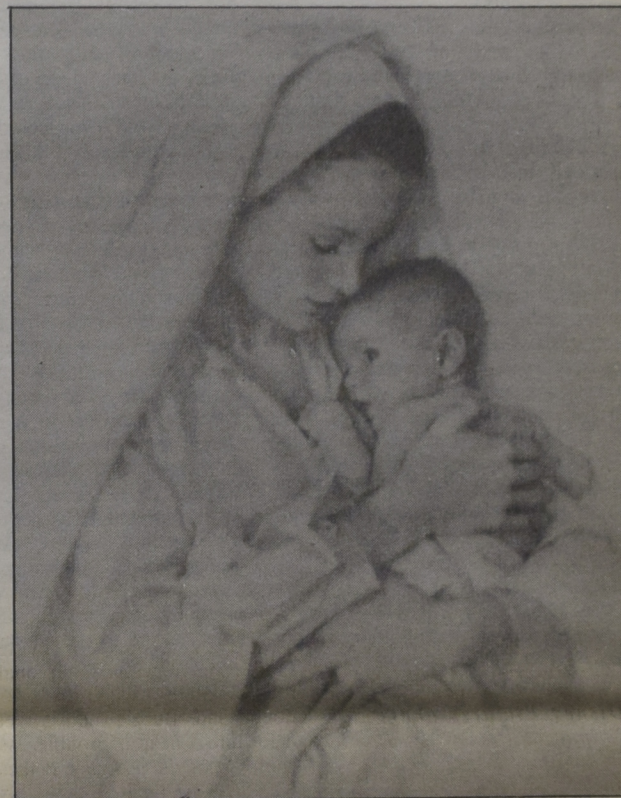
These and other views have led many to conclude that the virginal conception is histori-

cally implausible. Regardless of what one may think about it theologically, the historical evidence is not sufficiently strong to verify it: "Historical-critical research simply does not have the sources and tools available to reach a final decision on the historicity of the virginal conception narrated by Matthew and Luke," says John Meier in *A Marginal Jew* (p.222). Therefore, some maintain that faith in Jesus Christ, true man and true God, does not necessitate affirming a virginal conception.

Having eyes to see and ears to hear

Yet, doesn't all of this somehow miss the point? First of all, would the Gospel writers speak of a virginal conception if it were not based in fact? Convincing people of the resurrection was difficult enough. Why concoct fanciful stories?

Second, a stumbling block for us moderns is our belief in a closed universe. There is no opportunity for divine intervention. Further, we affirm all too readily, sometimes unconsciously, that ultimately only science and reason determine what is and what is not acceptable. But why affirm *these* kinds of (Enlightenment) beliefs? Why limit the possible?



A depiction of Mary and the infant Jesus designed by Kathy Lawrence

A virginal conception, as well as the Resurrection, is not tenable *until* and *unless* we admit to divine action — the possibility of divine intervention in human history. Both virginal conception and resurrection are miracles, explainable only when we have (spiritual) eyes to see them and ears to hear about them.

Christmas is as much about celebration as it is about hope — hope for divine action in a humanly desperate and hopeless situation. No doubt science and reason can, and have, worked "miracles." But their power is limited, especially in the face of evil, greed and self-interest.

Humans need a greater miracle.

As the biblical commentator Witherington put it: "Jesus is a miraculous gift to humanity, not initially the product of a normal human activity or process. He is a gift that comes ultimately from God, but comes through Mary in a way that allows one to say that Jesus' origins are both human and divine."

Will it not ultimately take the miraculous work of God, begun in Jesus, to restore us to comfort and hope, to full humanity?

John Valk is the Christian Reformed chaplain at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

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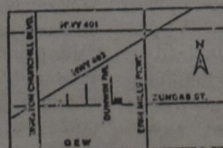
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Film review

Impressive debut for new computer animation technology

Marian Van Til



Animated movie stars Woody the cowboy and Buzz Lightyear

Toy Story

Rated Family; with the voices of Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Don Rickles, Wallace Shawn, Annie Potts, R. Lee Ermy, Erik Von Detten; produced by Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation; music by Randy Newman; conceived and directed by John Lasseter

Despite its name, *Toy Story* isn't a movie for young children only. If you're looking for a movie to which to take the whole family during the Christmas break, *Toy Story* will be a good choice.

Did you know that toys have secret lives that we human beings didn't know anything about (until now!)?

As soon as Andy, the boy who owns the toys, leaves his room, the toys spring to life and go about their own business and relationships. Their lives, it turns out, are not unlike ours. They develop alliances and friendships, adopt societal roles and have very human self-doubts and misconceptions.

Woody, a cowboy doll, has a major insecurity: he has long been Andy's favorite, but when Andy gets a spiffy new space-man, Buzz Lightyear, for his birthday, Woody feels threatened. Buzz has a flashing laser, a communications system and wings that emerge from his spacesuit so he can "fly." How can Woody, who has only a pull-string that allows him to say three or four phrases (when he's in the human world) compete with that?

Buzz, on the other hand, has

illusions, if not delusions, of grandeur: he refuses to believe he's only a child's plaything. He thinks he really is Buzz Lightyear, intergalactic peacekeeper.

When those two get put in the same room together, emotional rockets flare. Woody's self-doubt and Buzz's hubris get them into a heap of trouble. As well, Woody's jealousy makes the other toys begin to doubt his trustworthiness and veracity, and makes it more difficult for Woody and Buzz to extract themselves from their dangerous predicament.

A toy chest of engaging characters

There are some fascinating peripheral characters which add nuance, resonance and humor to the story. Mr. Potato Head is the slightly cynical humorist of the group (aptly given voice by Don Rickles). He's always ready with a sardonic quip, but at heart is a lonely guy hoping that some day a Mrs. Potato Head will show up on Andy's Christmas list. (He's really a character for the adults.)

Wallace Shawn speaks for the meek and introverted dinosaur who can't seem to live up to his fearsome name. And there's Little Bo Peep, who represents sweet reason and gentleness — and who's sweet on Woody; there's a slinky-bodied dachshund who wants to believe in Woody, and whose stretchable body comes in handy at a crucial moment; there's the remote-control car whose actions speak louder than words; there's a whole "Bucket 'O' Soldiers" who spring into reconnaissance action when needed.

To complicate the story, Andy will be moving to a new town in a couple of days. But in the meantime, living next door is Sid, a sadistic little creature who is less human than all the toys put together. His mission in life seems to be to mutate and destroy toys. In a particularly inventive scene near the end, the sad and scarred mutants help the healthy toys teach Sid a lasting lesson.

This well-written story and its characters will ring true for children of a variety of ages and personality types, as well as for the adults in the audience. How many kids haven't had worries about a new boy or girl, or sister or brother, usurping their place in a friend's or their parents' affections? How many are more meek than they'd like to be? How many want to be leaders but can't summon the courage? How many learn to be funny to cover their inner hurts?

'Real' and surreal

Toy Story is relevant and captivating, not only in the story itself but in the new medium in which it's told. This is the first feature-length film which was created and animated entirely via computer, and it has an amazing look. There is a three-dimensional clarity about it that doesn't allow it to be mistaken for traditional animation. A big advantage is that somehow the computer allows the kind of subtlety of facial expression that is impossible in traditional animation.

It's odd, though, that the word that most comes to mind in describing what this machine-generated animation looks like is "feeling." The film looks and feels astonishingly real; but it seems simultaneously surreal, a strange blending of the "real" and the "plastic." That makes it a bit unnerving, at least to those of us who grew up in the pre-computer age.

One has to lament, just a little, the passing of the long and great film age of painstaking, hand-made animation. Still, if *Toy Story* represents the brave new world of animation — as it does for now — it's an intriguing world, and still a moral one in which good triumphs over evil.

Adrienne Clarkson becomes chairperson of Museum of Civilization

OTTAWA (Canadian Scene) — Minister of Canadian Heritage Michel Dupy has announced the four-year appointment of Adrienne Clarkson as board chairperson of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Hong Kong-born Clarkson is one of Canada's best known personalities in the field of arts and culture. An officer of the Order of Canada, she is executive producer and host of *Adrienne Clarkson Presents*, CBC Television's flagship cultural program. She has hosted more than 3,500 television programs for CBC, was agent-general for Ontario in France, where she promoted Ontario's business and culture interests in

France, Italy and Spain, and served as president and publisher of McClelland & Stewart.

Clarkson has also written three books and numerous articles for Canada's print media. She has taught at the University of Toronto and obtained her MA in English Literature from the University of Toronto.

She has won dozens of national and international awards over her 30 years in broadcasting, most recently the Prix Anik Award for Best Entertainment Series in 1994 and a Columbus Award for directing and writing a film about the painter James Wilson Morrice. She is a member or patron of numerous organizations.

More monks make hit record


AMPLEFORTH, England — After the Benedictine monks of Silos, Spain, proved that chanting can make the secular pop charts, some English Benedictines also have a hit on their hands, reports Reuter's news service.

In late spring the "thriving spiritual community" of Ampleforth abbey and boys' school near York released a recording called "Vision of Peace: The Way of the Monk" on the Euphonia label. Since then it has risen to No. 2 on Britain's classical music charts and No. 73 on the mainstream charts, where it was sandwiched be-

tween Pink Floyd and Madness.

The album has sold 30,000 copies — small compared to the success of the monks' Spanish counterparts, but impressive when considering that a sale of 5,000 copies is "a big sale for classical records [in England]," according to Euphonia's John Trott.

Ampleforth, with 100 monks, is one of the largest monastic communities in Europe. Some 12,000 people visit every year, many on retreat, and 4,000 buyers of the album have written letters of appreciation to the abbey.



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Church

Calvin sem profs reaffirm CRC's stance on homosexuality

Ask Classis GR East to do so too

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CTS) — All 14 theological professors at Calvin Seminary, who are associate pastors of churches in Classis Grand Rapids East, recently petitioned their classis to affirm clearly the Christian Reformed Church's official position on homosexuality. That position was adopted by the denomination's annual synod in 1973.

The occasion for the professors' petition was Classis GR East's handling of the report "Ministry with Persons who are Homosexual" on Oct. 19 (see CC, Nov. 3). "The classical

report is not controlled by the synodical stance, fails explicitly to affirm 1973's theological and ethical guidelines, and in several places raises fundamental questions about the CRC position," wrote the professors. Confusion and unrest have resulted, they point out.

The faculty members have asked classis at its January 1996 meeting to endorse explicitly the 1973 guidelines, and thus to go on record that homosexuality is "a distortion of God's plan for sexuality" and that homosexual practice is inconsistent with the Bible's teaching.

The professors' letter affirms the importance of compassionate, Christian ministry to homosexual persons. It acknowledges that the church's effort in this regard has been inadequate. And it commends classis for taking initiative in developing ministry guidelines for its churches. But it regrets that classis did not speak with moral clarity on the subject of homosexuality itself.

Many of the professors also conveyed their concern about the report and classis' action directly to their own church councils.

German churches rank fourth on list of trustworthy institutions

BONN, Germany (EP) — German churches did not fare well in a poll conducted by the Institute for Applied Social Sciences on the trustworthiness of institutions, according to a report published by a German news service. Out of the 2,000 people surveyed for the poll, only 48 per cent said that they trusted churches the most. Newspapers, the police and the

German Constitutional Court all placed higher in the poll than churches. Institutions listed as

less trustworthy than churches included unions, the European community and political parties.

Radio voice of 'Focus on the Family' dies

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (EP) — Rob Gregory, the voice of "Family News in

Focus," died Nov. 10 of complications from heart surgery. He was 43. Gregory had been with Focus on the Family since 1989. The daily radio program is broadcast on 1,222 U.S. radio stations and 425 Canadian stations. Gregory was also executive director of Briargate Media, a division of Focus on the Family. Gregory was born and raised in Toronto. Before coming to Focus on the Family he worked with WMHK in Columbia, S.C.

Gregory had Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder that leads to abnormalities of the bones, eyes and heart; persons with the disease generally die before age 50, often from heart complications. Persons with Marfan syndrome are also very tall; Gregory was 6-foot-10. Focus on the Family President James Dobson broke the news of Gregory's death to the radio audience of "Family News in Focus." Dobson called Gregory "my wonderful friend" and said "he was deeply loved by all of us here in the ministry."

Willibrord's message overpowers the fiercely independent Frisians

Bert Witvoet

It was 1300 years ago November 21, 1995, that the English monk Willibrord was ordained Archbishop of the Frisians by Pope Sergius. In the seventh century Friesland constituted the northern part of the Netherlands (everything north of the Rhine River) as well as the north-eastern part of Germany.

To commemorate this event, Pope John Paul II held a mass at the Church of the Frisians in Rome on November 21, and special services were held in Utrecht, the city where Willibrord's church was allegedly situated.

The appointment to his post did not mean that Willibrord could count on the support of the Frisians, according to an article in *De Wekker*, a Dutch church paper of the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*. The Frisians had, by and large, not yet been converted from their paganism. It was first and foremost a mission assignment.

The Frisian king Radboud was not the least interested in becoming a Christian and falling under the influence of Rome. Conversion in those days also had political implications. Friesland never was part of the Roman Empire, and independence was a prized possession.

Yet one can say, says *De Wekker*, that as far as the northern Netherlands are concerned, the knowledge of the Bible and faith in Christ started with Willibrord. Willibrord was born in 658 in Yorkshire, England, and was one of many enthusiastic missionaries from Ireland and England who wanted to bring the gospel to the European continent.

Doing mission work among the Frisians was dangerous in those days. A contemporary of Willibrord's, Boniface, was also active among the Frisians and was killed by them in Dokkum.

According to legend, the question whether the Christian god was mightier than the Germanic gods was decided when missionaries chopped down a holy oak tree and the heathen gods did not seek revenge.



St. Willibrord as archbishop between two priests. (From a miniature for his feast day: Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.)

Graham Saskatoon crusade draws 55,000

SASKATOON, Saskatchewan (EP) — More than 55,000 people participated in Billy Graham's first crusade in Saskatchewan by either attending the crusade or watching via satellite, according to organizers. It was also the first time that Billy Graham teamed up for a crusade with his son Franklin, who was recently named his father's successor.

Almost 200 churches participated in the crusade, enabling the local crusade committee to raise the entire budget

of \$420,000 in advance.

Contemporary Christian artist Michael W. Smith and country singer Ricky Scaggs performed, as did Al Denson and Johnny Cash. Several thousand people responded to his altar call. "When we see the response, it is obvious, the hunger in the hearts of people," said Robert Radtke, chairperson of the crusade committee. "My impression is that people [here] have been waiting for something like this for some time."

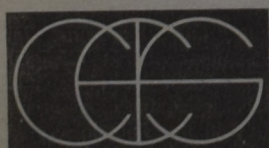


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Church

The splendor and pain of the mother of Jesus

On Patmos John saw a wondrous sign in the sky: "A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head" (Rev.12:1). Sun, moon and stars have always fascinated us who dwell on planet Earth. Many people worship the sun, are fearful of the moon, and believe that when we are born our lot is unalterably predicted by the position of the stars. However, by means of this sign in the sky, God says that this woman is more important to him than all the heavenly bodies: the moon is her footstool, the sun her brilliant robe and the stars crown her head.

This queen of heaven shares the pain of her earthly sisters: "She was pregnant and cried out in pain." She is going to give birth to God's Messiah. And the red dragon, the evil contender for the kingship of the universe, wants to destroy the holy child.

Add this fascinating chapter of the Book of Revelation to your Advent and Christmas readings. In Advent we begin with the ancient prophecies, then we proceed to the narratives of the Evangelists until, on Christmas Day, we celebrate the birth of the One who gave us life. But if we add the reading of Revelation 12 to our roster, we get a picture of the significance of the coming of Jesus that is unparalleled.

Here the birth of the Boy is the reason why the woman is crying and why the dragon is persecuting her. The Baby's destiny is the throne of the universe. But his rulership is hotly contested. It involves a war in heaven and on earth. After one battle, heaven celebrates V-Day. But "woe to the earth and the sea." God gives wings to that beautiful woman, or she would perish. And her children are constantly attacked by the evil one.

Wholesome corrective

Reading Rev. 12 is a wholesome corrective at Christmas time. *Who is the Woman?*

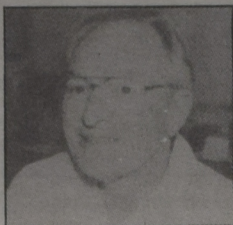
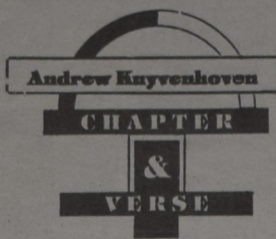
She is the mother of Jesus. Therefore many Christians call her Mary, "Queen of Heaven." The Spanish painter Murillo seems to have been the first to make the connection between the majestic sign and the girl of Nazareth; but later a pope made it official. However, the *Jerusalem Bible*, a scholarly Roman Catholic translation of the Scriptures, says it is not so.

Dispensationalists (who say we are in the church-age that will soon end with the rapture, and then it's Israel's turn again) are sure the woman stands for Israel. In his commentary on the Book of Revelation, Tim LaHaye titles chapter 12, "Satan versus Israel." The attack on the woman's offspring, verse 17, he calls "Satan's final anti-Semitic crusade."

The woman is supposed to make us think of Eve (whose offspring will crush the serpent's head in the great battle, Gen. 3:15), and of Mary, and of Israel. But it is better to see her as a symbol of the church of all ages (because her offspring holds to the testimony of Jesus, v.17).

The woman stands for the community of the faithful, the daughter of Zion, the one Holy Church. She is mother and offspring of Jesus. She will share in his glory if she remains steadfast in her present suffering. And the Lord gave the vision of Rev. 12 for the encouragement of his beloved.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven is a retired pastor of the Christian Reformed Church. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Jerusalem's Mount of Olives to provide venue for historic World Prayer Congress

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif. — Pilgrims and delegates from the nations of the world will convene during the feast of Pentecost, May 22-26, 1996, for the World Prayer Congress on the western slope of the Mount Of Olives in Jerusalem. A 50-acre site, which has been owned by one family for over 400 years and which has never been used for any purpose other than agriculture, is being prepared to accommodate several thousand people for daily prayer gatherings each afternoon. The event, revisiting the nearly two-millennium-old birth of Christianity is believed to be the first such multi-day international religious event held entirely out-of-doors in the city's modern history.

According to the biblical account of Pentecost in Acts 2, Jerusalem's streets teemed with pilgrims from around the world during Pentecost in A.D. 30. Sponsors of the World Prayer Congress are hopeful that its streets will be filled with Christian pilgrims from around the world whose mission is to pray for world peace, for national and international leaders, for the peace of Jerusalem, and for

the church and its related ministries.

Explains Roberta Hromas, chairperson of the World Prayer Congress, "As Christians we believe in prayer. When one prays, 'God have mercy. Send Revival. Being with me,' we also believe that every area of our world from the highest echelons of government, and every level of society can be dynamically effected. As we return to this magnificent city so loved by our Lord and where Christianity emerged out of a matrix of Jewish culture, we join Israelis in celebration of the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem's founding by King David. We invite all who have a desire to connect with their biblical roots and spiritually impact our world to join us."

12-day tour

Comments Charles Pankow, president of Friendship International Tours, which is responsible for travel and accommodations, "In an effort to encourage wide participation by individuals, there are four departures for any who wish to participate in the World Prayer Congress in the context of a

moderately priced, 12-day comprehensive tour of the Holy Land. They are May 16-27, May 18-29, May 19-30 and May 20-31. Extensions to other Bible lands are also available.

Says Hromas, "Each afternoon, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., the time of the 'evening sacrifice' in the Second Temple, participants will gather on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, just above the Garden of Gethsemane, to offer what the prophet Jeremiah called 'the sacrifice of prayer' (Jer.33:11). They'll be led in a prayer service by key Christian world leaders from a wide range of denominations. The service will be punctuated with appropriate Scripture reading, music and brief messages."

For further information, write World Prayer Congress, 710 Silver Spur Rd., Suite 341, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274 (310) 377-1775; FAX at 373-1375. For information about land and travel arrangements for groups and individuals, contact Friendship International Tours: (800) 782-4597; or FAX at (818) 347-4315.

British churches launch advertising campaign

LONDON, England (EP) — A coalition of churches in England has launched its latest national advertising campaign aimed at increasing church attendance during the Christmas holiday.

The campaign was developed by Christians in Media, an organization which provides professional advertising services for churches and Christian organizations at little or no cost. The new campaign, which encourages people to "Make Room for God this Christmas," is based on the Christmas story and features posters that list activities — from "turkey to pine needles" — that can crowd out the worship of God during the holiday season.

The Churches' Advertising Network — a compilation of Baptist, Church of England, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed churches — began using advertising campaigns five years ago. Two of the network's campaigns have achieved national and interna-

tional recognition.

A campaign run in January 1995 provoked controversy with the statement, "Christians make better lovers," as well as the Easter campaign, "Surprise," said Jesus to his friends three days after they buried him."

An independent survey regarding the "surprise" campaign showed that 70 per cent of survey participants thought the advertising was appropriate for the Christian churches. More than 50 per cent said that

the advertising would cause them to think about their faith.

"People wonder why the festive activities still leave them with a feeling of emptiness," said Richard Thomas, a spokesperson for the churches' group. "Often, that's because they have forgotten the vital ingredient. It doesn't take much to spend a short time worshipping the one who created us. But Christmas isn't complete unless you make room for God."

van der Woerd
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Feature

To be (or not to be) a pilgrim in the Holy Land

Part Two

During the months of June and July, David Koyzis travelled with his fiancée, Dr. Nancy Calvert, with another couple and their children, and a group of 44 Wheaton College students to the eastern Mediterranean region. Their journey began in Greece and took them to Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and finally to Rome, where the Wheaton tour ended. Following the completion of the formal part of the tour, Koyzis and Calvert spent two weeks on the island of Cyprus, where David's father was born.

In this second of four articles, Koyzis recounts his impressions upon visiting many of the places with biblical associations.

David T. Koyzis

It would be too much to say that until last summer the Bible was only a book to me. But it is certainly true that as I read about such places as Jerusalem, Mount Carmel, the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee and the Judean Desert, I was forced to imagine them in my mind in much the way I might imagine the characters and places of a novel.

Yet the lands in which the biblical narrative occurred are real places inhabited by flesh and blood people who just happen to be surrounded by the evidence of three ancient monotheistic religions. It is not surprising, then, that these lands are the destination of devout Christian, Jewish and Muslim pilgrims, all of whom are, in some sense, attempting to get in touch with the roots of their respective faiths.

Much of our stay in Israel

was spent at the Institute of Holy Land Studies, located on Mount Zion just south of the old walled city of Jerusalem. The institute, whose current president is Sidney DeWaal, past president of The King's University College in Edmonton, attracts students principally from North America who are interested in studying the geography, people, languages and traditions of the region.

Ironie temple

This was our home base, and from here we travelled through much of the territory of Israel and the occupied West Bank, visiting numerous sites with connections to both Old and New Testaments. We even made a weekend trip into Jordan, including a visit to Petra, the spectacular city carved by the ancient Nabataeans into the cliffs southeast of the Dead Sea.

Not all the sites we visited are equally well-attested with

respect to their biblical significance. Of course, the ruins of such cities as Beer Sheva, Dan and Jericho have been subject to extensive excavation by archaeologists.

One place I found particularly interesting was Arad, an ancient Judaeon city boasting, of all things, a Jewish temple, complete with a Holy of Holies and steps up to an altar. This was apparently one of the so-called "high places" spoken of in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Kings 15:14), which Israelites established as alternatives to the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, in defiance of God's commands through the prophets. It seemed ironic that, although both Solomon's and Herod's temples were long ago destroyed, this apostate temple was still reasonably intact.

But the claimed Citadel of David and David's Tomb are misnomers, as is Mount Zion itself, where they are located. It seems that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, later generations erroneously concluded that the City of David was southwest rather than southeast of the present old city, and thus assigned these two Davidic sites seemingly arbitrarily to places along this alternative Mount Zion.

Maybe, maybe not

The Christian sites were naturally more significant for our group, despite the doubtful



The Tomb of Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.

authenticity of many of these. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the traditional site of Calvary and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, is one of the better supported such sites. But the grotto beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem may or may not have been the birthplace of Jesus. The Dominus Flevit Church, honoring the place where Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), was built by the Franciscans on its present site, not because it was well-attested, but because this was the only land they were able to acquire in the area.

'A rather bad pilgrim'

Before this trip I expected that I might be emotionally moved to visit many of the places associated with the Bible, especially those connected to the life of Christ. As we were standing quietly in the Cave of the Apocalypse on the Greek island of Patmos, one member of our group was obviously in tears to be so close to where John the Apostle had written the Revelation. And another wept as we stood for the first time outside the 16th century walls of the old city of Jerusalem.

I myself didn't react this way, for whatever reason. (Could 35-degree temperatures coupled with the stresses of tending scores of young people stifle the Spirit?) To be sure, I found it fascinating to visit these places, and having been there has enriched my reading of Scripture, making it come alive in a way that it was not before. But I cannot honestly say that

standing in what is presumed to be the tomb of Christ brought me closer to God. In this respect, I probably made a rather bad pilgrim. Eastern Christians, in particular, invest much spiritual significance in geographical sites and relics. I have Orthodox roots on my father's side and many relatives are still members of the Orthodox Church.

But visiting this part of the world made me surprisingly aware of how Reformed I am. I found, finally, that I am more likely to feel closer to God, not through human-made icons or shrines erected over ostensibly "holy" places, but by working and worshipping among God's people. The regular reading of Scripture and participation in the Lord's Supper are to me the more vivid avenues whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to his people the love of God the Father and the saving message of Jesus Christ.

Still, visiting the "holy" lands has added new depth to the Scriptures for me. I will never again be able to read Psalm 42 without recalling the verdant headwaters of the Jordan and the rapids cascading from their source of Mount Hermon. Nor will I be able to read Psalm 137 without thinking of the city missed so terribly by the exiles in Babylon — a city which continues to exert a special power over inhabitants and visitors alike.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.



The Church of St. Anne in Jerusalem, overlooking the Pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed the paralytic (John 5:1-16.)

Feature

Were the Wise Men's gifts truly kingly?

John Tissot

*"Three kings from Persian lands afar
To Jordan follow the pointing star...
Full royal gifts they bear for the king,
Gold, incense, myrrh their offering."*

Peter Cornelius (1824-70) wrote the above words for a German Christmas carol. Three gifts for a new king. But what about those gifts some 2,000 years ago?

We can easily understand gold. It's as meaningful and useful today as it likely was back then. But what was so special about frankincense and myrrh, and do they have any uses today?

Frankincense. "Frank" means free and "incense" comes from the Latin word meaning to burn. Frankincense burns freely, but without flame. As it smolders it gives off a wonderful aroma. When myrrh burns, it too emits an almost "mystical" fragrance.

The 'magic two'

Centuries ago, the Israelites used sweet-smelling substances — incense — in their religious ceremonies, and they needed lots of it. At about the same time, the Egyptians discovered the aromatic properties of these same two products and they, too, wanted frankincense and myrrh — we might call them the "magic two" — for their religious ceremonies. These dwellers along the Nile wanted more and more, actually tons, of the magic two. This demand was to create an interesting economic situation.

Both frankincense and myrrh are gum resins that can be had by "tapping" the sap of two trees, which, it so happened, grew only in Arabia and neighboring lands, Somalia, for example. Whoever controlled the land where the two trees grew controlled a profitable empire.

The southern part of Arabia was called Saba (Sheba) and the people living there knew a good thing when they saw it. They not only controlled most of the production of the two ingredients for the much-needed incense, but their strategic location on the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula gave them control of trade routes

going east/west and north/south.

The Egyptians sent their armies marching all over the Middle East in search of the two resins. The Israelites sent their traders far and wide looking for the same to resins. All the while, the people in southern Arabia became wealthy and powerful.

A spice-bearing 'train'

About a thousand years before Christ, Sheba had a queen called Bilqis, whom the Bible calls the Queen of Sheba. The Bible tells us that she, along with a train of camels bearing gifts, went north to confer with King Solomon. The King James version of the Bible tells us (1 Kings 10): *And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices and very much gold and precious stones....*

About this trip, Miller and Goodell, writing in *The Surgeons Library*, state, "Presumably, the journey was made to effect a trade agreement, which included the sale of frankincense and myrrh."

Was all of this activity just for the sake of two resins milked from trees? And all to produce sweet-smelling smoke? Yes. But there is much more to the story.

Necessary commodities in a dry land

The Egyptians wanted these two resins to burn while they prepared their dead for burial or mummification. The smell of the smoke masked other offensive odors.

The Egyptians lived under a hot sun in a land almost devoid of water for bathing. What they needed, then, was some substance that would fortify their skin and cover up the fact they hadn't bathed. Enter frankin-

cense and myrrh, pungent resins that could be used in making sweet-smelling oils. Oh, how

medicines for a variety of ailments.

The Nubians, who lived in

Today, Arabs use frankincense because, one writer states, "It is good for the teeth and gums and helps clear the brain." Celsus, a Roman, wrote a text on medicine, *De Medicina*, in which he advocated frankincense to clean wounds.

While frankincense does have certain medicinal uses, it can't compete with myrrh. The Arabs knew myrrh as an antiseptic. By the 18th century, surgeons were still advised to use it in their dressings.

Romans also accepted myrrh as an antiseptic, using it as an antidote for poisons and for infections of the eyes, ears or mouth.

Pliny, another Roman who wrote of medicine, reported that myrrh was used for the bit of the horned viper, for toothaches and for sore tonsils. He claimed it also worked against offensive breath, as well as for many other general uses.

Clearly, frankincense and myrrh, together and separately, had many uses beyond the doors of the temple. Miller and Goodell (*The Surgeon's Library* again) point out that both resins were used in the process of mummification and, in this use, the Egyptians "paralleled the efforts of the physicians to prolong mortal life through the same substance."

Good for body and soul

Truly, frankincense and myrrh were needed in life and in death. Or, to put it another way, they were good for the body and the soul.

Through reading all accounts, it would not be an exaggeration to state that myrrh was the penicillin of its day. And today, you can find myrrh in your local health store or wherever "natural" herbs and medicines are sold. More than that, books dealing with natural products and remedies, such as *The Herb Book* by John Lust, give modern uses for this ancient "magical medicine."

Looking back now at the years just before Christ's birth, we see that there could have been no more important gifts for a new king than gold, frankincense and myrrh, eternal gifts for an eternal king.



The three Wise Men, as depicted by Spanish painter Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez (1599-1660).

those dry-land inhabitants needed the magic two!

Even today, these two resins are used in the production of perfumes. The Fragrance Foundation of New York tells us, "The flavor of myrrh oil is warm, somewhat pungent, but very rich and pleasantly aromatic. Myrrh oil is used in perfumes of the heavy-floral type, heavy-Oriental type, woody-balsamic bases, etc."

But wait, there's more. Besides smelling good, frankincense and myrrh were used as

southern Egypt, chewed frankincense for sore mouths. Even today, dentists use it for problems of the mouth, including something known as spongy gums.

In the sixth century, a physician known as Dioscorides, suggested a mixture of frankincense and leek juice to stop bleeding. In the 17th century Culpepper wrote a lengthy book on medicine in which he called for frankincense to "fill up old ulcers" and "stop bleeding."

John Tissot is a free lance writer who lives in Carpinteria, Calif.

Church

Calvinists meet Russian Orthodox at conference in St. Petersburg

Adrian Helleman

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — Take a handful of Dutch and Russian scholars, sprinkle with several Americans, two Hungarians and one Canadian, add a generous heaping of Russian students and, for good measure, about 30 Dutch tourists, then you have the ingredients for the conference on "Orthodoxy and Calvinism" held in St. Petersburg from Oct. 16 to 20.

While this was actually the seventh conference organized by Dutch churches to promote interaction between Orthodox and Reformed believers, it was the first one to deal extensively with theology. This helps to explain the presence of several scholars from North America.

Countering Russia's mafia

The five-day conference was held in the facilities of "Open Christianity," an ecumenical institute which not only provides courses in philosophy and theology, but also operates a Christian day school. These facilities provided a subtext for the conference, since the St. Petersburg municipal council was busy trying to evict "Open Christianity" from the building granted to the institute several years before.

The facility, which was built on top of a subway station but was in terrible shape, was repaired extensively with the aid of people from the Netherlands. The location and these repairs invited the interest of the Russian mafia, which, it appears, persuaded the municipal council to reclaim the building. Part of the conference was thus devoted to meetings with the press and the municipality, as

well as representatives from the American and Dutch consulates in St. Petersburg.

The conference's primary purpose was to encourage dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed theologians and philosophers. The director of "Open Christianity," Dr. Konstantin Ivanov, is an Orthodox scholar who was fired from the university because of his refusal to endorse communism during the '80s. He was jailed for six months and released only when Gorbachov came to power.

In his opening lecture, Ivanov pointed out that the image of the Orthodox Church is quite often distorted in the minds of other believers. The Orthodox, he explained, are open to other forms of Christianity. He cited one Metropolitan who declared that whoever confesses the name of Christ is a brother. Ivanov's main thesis was that, in dialogues such as this one, discussion should not be limited to theology. Theology is only meaningful when it is discussed in the context of social and cultural issues.

That's why Ivanov is very impressed with Henry Meeter's book, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*, which was recently translated and published in Russian. For Ivanov, the description of the Christian state is the most

valuable part of this book.

A small part of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, published as *The Golden Book* in Russian, was presented at the conference. This volume is the first installment of the complete translation

the first time notices how empty it is in comparison with his or her own church. This emptiness suggested to the speaker the image of a family ready to go on a trip. A Russian family, he noted, will always take a moment to reflect quietly before they make a long journey. Protestants thus seem to be getting ready for the journey to the next life.

Letsoovich ap-

sees them as devoted only to gaining power.

In striking contrast, doctoral student Arthur Zylstra, a representative of the Centre for Reformational Philosophy in the Netherlands, tried to offer a way out of the leasing problems facing "Open Christianity" by comparing situations in St. Petersburg and Amsterdam, and applying to the situation an analysis characteristic of Reformational philosophy.

This conference was not all work. A tour of the Hermitage,



Above: The newly-renovated Open Christianity building in St. Petersburg. Right: Dr. Konstantin Ivanov, president of O.C. (left), and Dr. John Vander Stelt of Dordt College, who spoke at the conference.



of Calvin's major work. Other than these books, unfortunately, very little has appeared in Russian thus far on either Calvin or Calvinism.

A pastor and high school teacher from the Netherlands introduced Calvin as an ecumenist. This was necessary because Calvin has a rather bad image in Russia, as a stern father figure. Ivanov had used a picture of Calvin as he appears on the cover of one of the books, to show that this is, indeed, the image Russians have of him. An "ecumenical" Calvin will not eliminate this image entirely, but does portray him in a new light.

Ready to travel

Much of the conference was devoted to the impressions which Orthodox and Reformed believers have of each other. Thus it was very stimulating to listen to an Orthodox scholar, Dr. Vasily Letsovitich, describe the beauty of Protestant worship services. Since one of his grandmothers was Reformed and the other was Orthodox, he could offer a unique perspective on this subject.

An Orthodox person who enters a Protestant church for

precipitates the role that music plays in Protestantism, as well as the contribution that Luther and Calvin made to the development of the German and French languages. The Orthodox can learn from Protestants not only in the area of philosophy and law, but also in aesthetics.

Dr. John Vanderstelt from Dordt College in Iowa compared the Orthodox and Calvinistic views on faith and theology. He noted difficulties in both views and presented a possible way out through a reformulation of both terms. This was followed by the bishop of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Dr. L. Hegedus, who discussed faith and theology in the Hungarian Reformed tradition.

The next day, Dr. Yuri Solonin, who is dean of the faculty of Philosophy at the University of St. Petersburg, offered a very somber analysis of Russian philosophy. His view of the role of intellectuals in Russia, and he includes himself in this category, is depressing. He

which has one of the finest collections of European art in the world, and a press conference at city hall on the status of the building of "Open Christianity" rounded out one day.

Another day saw us on a tour of the magnificent palace of Catherine the Great. The Russian government is sparing no expense in repairing the palace, which was stripped of all its treasures by the Germans during the Second World War. We also visited several sites associated with the Russian Revolution.

In a unique way, past and present became intertwined at this conference and representatives of Calvinism and Orthodoxy from Russia, the Netherlands, Hungary and North America were brought face to face. While there is still much to learn about each other, a beginning has been made at reaching a good understanding.

Dr. Adrian Helleman and his wife, Dr. Wendy Helleman, are Canadians teaching Christian studies at Moscow University on behalf of Christian Studies International.

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Christmas
and a prosperous New Year.*



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Economics

We need to know the NOW and we need it *now*

Bert Hielema

Rural anywhere, 1895, in Europe and North America: Small farmer. Ten cows, a couple of pigs, some chicken and sheep. Each day the farmer's wife and her maid process the milk into cream, make butter and cheese and sell the surplus cream. The whey is fed to the pigs, which are later killed for meat, sausage and bacon. The land is worked with a horse and plow for grain and potatoes; some is used for their own consumption, the rest sold.

\$40,000. No time to make things. Thus, everything is calculated in dollars and entered in the national register, known as the Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. The Bank and Wall Street like it this way.

What is this almighty GDP thing? It is a figure which measures everything that is produced or bought, whether good or ill, positive or negative, life-enhancing or death-promoting. Because money is the key, life is much more cruel.

This takes its toll: more

and other family related activities are not entered in the books of the nation: the laundering of clothes, the housecleaning, the meal preparation, all these domestic tasks that keep families together and the police from the door have no national economic value. If you read a story to your child or grandchild, we will never find a trace of this in the GDP. However, if these children watch TV, the cable companies benefit and Nielsen, the rating agency, will tell the TV stations to charge more for the cereal ads. If we send our kids to Christian schools, and so impart positive values to them — values that tell kids that parents care for their spiritual direction, that love of God is more important than riches — the national accountants frown because how do you measure the Spirit? It cannot be measured so it gets a fat Zero.

375 vs. 2 1/2 billion

When WalMart opens a new store, some 200 people may get part time jobs, but what is not advertised is that small businesses downtown and in surrounding villages will probably have to close as a result. At the same time, the cohesion of communities disappears, and with it, the fabric of families and the network of churches and service clubs. The same thing happens when factories go overseas. Perhaps we get shoes or toys a bit cheaper. But what if the cost of policing goes up, or we have more pollution from driving further, or the overall well-being of the nation declines? Who measures that? Not the GDP!

And then there is the rich/poor split. The GDP has risen constantly but the distribution of riches has been very uneven. By 1994 the share of wealth owned by the top one per cent had risen to 40 per cent, doubling in less than 20 years. It is now the same as in 1929 just before the Depression. Imagine: a mere 375 people in the world who are billionaires, collectively have as much wealth as the combined possessions of the poorest 2.5 billion people.

Since 1989, for every one person who has become better off there are 20 who have lost

ground. One noted economist, Lester Thurow, compares this development to "putting a pressure cooker on the stove over a full flame and waiting to see how long it takes to explode." Who measures the well-being of the majority of the people? Not the GDP.

Let's do some calculating. We have seen a lot of growth in the economy, with the GDP doubling since the 1960s. Has this been genuine progress? A rough estimate of the composition of the GDP indicates that health costs have increased to 12 per cent of the GDP. Is that progress? Pollution clean-up is now three per cent of the GDP. Law enforcement, court and jail costs are now four per cent. Children's Aid, community services, family counselling, and other social assistance (not counting welfare payments) are now four per cent of the GDP. Is that progress? A further 20 per cent of the GDP is strictly spent on capital depletion. Oil, timber and mineral extraction are a direct loss to the wealth of the nation, yet counted as a positive contribution.

Just imagine: if a family has some reserve capital and dips into it to make ends meet, is that a good sign? Of course not. Yet the GDP includes the depletion of capital resources as income.

Based on the above, close to 45 per cent of the GDP does not belong there and yet this Greatly Distorted Picture is used each month as the most valuable indicator of the nation's financial health.

A new measure

We need a different way to measure what's really happening in the country. There is more to feeling good than just dollars and cents. What we need to know is the National Overall Well-being and we need it now. This NOW can consist of many different "GDPs."

For example:

1) We must tell the politicians that we need a new GDP so that each family will receive a Guarantee Domestic Payment. This is the only way to enter the positive contribution the family makes to society. It will restore the dignity of domestic labor and



Economic

Housekeeping

Bert Hielema



volunteer work, as in our society apparently only money conveys prestige. The beauty of such a payment is that it will eliminate the need for welfare and its bureaucracy. If the Conservative government in Ontario, for example, is really interested in conservation then it should encourage such initiative.

2) Now we often give grants to large companies to deplete our national resources while heavily taxing the people who make the real contributions to society. That is nonsense. What we need is another GDP in the form of a General Depletion Policy that compensates future generations for the loss of mineral wealth or easy access to it. A tax on natural resources at point of extraction or removal would aid both the government wallet and conservation. It seems logical that resource conservation should be a priority for a party which calls itself conservative.

3) All negative "contributions" such as crime prevention and court costs, alarm systems, car accidents, pollution costs, environmental illnesses, dieting costs, tobacco and alcohol related addictions, gambling — anything that does not contribute positively to the National Overall Well-being — should be deducted from the Gross Domestic Product, in the form of a Generous Deduction Provision.

The end result would not be a Gross Domestic Product as we now know it. What we need now is a National Overall Well-being indicator.

Bert Hielema based some of his column on a recent Atlantic Monthly feature with the title "If the Economy is Up, Why is America Down?" He lives in Tweed, Ont.



In the winter a few trees are converted to saw-logs and boards. The little cash thus generated is used to pay for the hired help, coffee, tea, clothing, church support, perhaps a small mortgage. Per capita income: say, \$400 per person, poor by today's standard, even allowing for inflation.

The type of life? Probably more relaxed and easy-going, certainly more church and community centred than today. I am sure that in general, people then would have had a high "emotional quotient" now the newest measure of future success.

Western World farmer, 1995: The woods are gone and so are the servants. The woman has an outside job. Now there are 100 cows and young cattle, a dog and some cats, milk is shipped away, and everything, including two-per cent milk, is bought. Income per person: perhaps

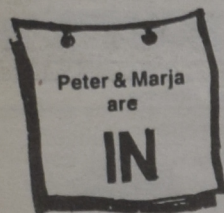
divorce, which is good for the GDP — lawyer's fees, appraisal costs, new mortgage to finance a cash settlement, another house to buy; and because people can't cope, more stress and illness, which also increases the GDP because it means X-rays, doctors, ambulances.

A 'Greatly Distorted Picture'

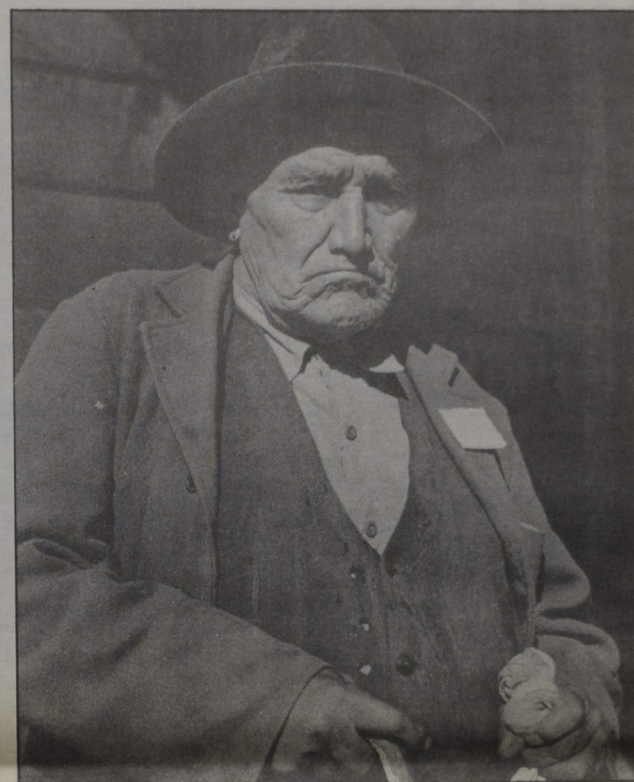
And I could go on. The best things that can happen to the economy are hurricanes, earthquakes or large environmental disasters because they bring (as wars used to do) a lot of employment. They all add into the GDP, which, in reality, give a Greatly Distorted Picture.

The GDP distorts real life not only by counting negative as positive, but also by ignoring the things it can't count. Today 70 per cent of all housework

Advice



Why listen to Grandpa?



Hilda J. Born

Promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness... and not turn away from your own flesh and blood (Gen. 47:29b and Isaiah 58:7c).

Grandpa embarrasses me. The older he gets the more outrageous are the stories he invents and delights in telling. I would like him to sit quietly, like an elderly prophet, perhaps. At least that is what I always imagined, men did at the ripe old age of 90.

"How will it influence his audience, our children, his grandchildren?" I wondered aloud.

"Don't worry, Mom," my son assured me, "we know he tells those stories to make himself feel better. You know he can't do the things he used to enjoy, like hammering nails or drive a sporty car. So now he tries to be an important person by telling exciting things. It doesn't really harm anybody and it gives him something different to share with each visitor."

"But, son, you know perfectly well that the stories can't all be true," I argued.

"That is just the point," my son asserted, "We know that they really are make-believe stories. Don't let it upset you; it entertains us. Some of his exag-

gerations are funny and we laugh together; you know that's healthy. Didn't you always tell us to be kind to everyone, especially people in our own family? What do you think is Grandpa's real wish at this stage in his life?"

We both fell silent in thought before he continued, "Isn't it to have us near him? Because his weak legs can't walk toward us, and his shaking hands can't help us build anymore, words are the only thing he has left to give us. If you scold him for the way he uses them, you'll rob him and us of our last chance to connect. Then we'll just have to sit silently and stare at one another. Is that what you want?"

Shamefully I admitted, "Of course not. You are absolutely right, and you're showing more wisdom than I am. I hope you'll remember to be kind and listen to me, too, even when I'm old and peevish. If you give me that promise now, like Joseph did to his father Jacob, I'll look forward to my golden years."

Heavenly Father, forgive my impatience with Grandpa. Help me to treat him with kindness and respect. Help me to remember that I am not perfect. Only You are.

Hilda Born and her husband live on a farm in Abbotsford, B.C.

Use common sense in screening bulletin announcements

Dear P & M:

Recently our church council published the following policy statement regarding our weekly bulletin:

The weekly bulletin shall primarily serve to inform the membership about the church's program of activities and matters of special interest to the congregation. It will, however, also be open to inclusion of announcements and/or information from or about the Christian community at large and matters of civil or cultural interest. The following regulations shall be observed for responsible facilitation of the latter:

a.) the spiritual content of the information and/or announcements from other or para-church organizations must be consistent with the confessional and church-orderly stance of the Christian Reformed Church.

b.) Any announcements or information that may conflict with our worship times may not be advertised in the bulletin.

c.) Should the bulletin clerk be unclear as to whether requested announcements or information meets the criteria spelled out under "a" above he/she shall request adjudication by council's executive committee.

d.) The executive committee shall submit a full report of any such action to the next meeting of council for approval.

My question is this: What is the purpose of church bulletins? Do churches use them to inform, educate, regulate, restrict, promote, discourage, give formal approval/disapproval to, instruct, advise, create cohesiveness, etc.? Are we in danger of writing a new holy writ?

Dear Questioning Bulletin Policy:

Wow! What a policy! And what a question! We haven't come across so much legalese and so many run-on sentences since we last read the fine print on our mortgage papers and insurance policies. If all this is a new kind of Holy Writ, it seems to be committed to using the kind of English that only shows up in lawyers' offices and the King James Version of the Bible!

Whenever a council makes this kind of proclamation you can count on the fact that something has happened behind the scenes. So, down comes the law. That aroused our curiosity. What was the controversial context in which this policy was spawned? We'll never know, but don't be surprised that others in your congregation have also wondered why this heavy-handed missile (or is it "missal"!) was suddenly launched.

Many churches probably have some simple guidelines for their bulletins. Basically, once you decipher its language, your church's policy is not way out in left field. Most pastors, clerks and secretaries, however, just use plain common sense when screening incoming announcements. This common sense tells us that the primary purpose of the bulletin is to promote fellowship by keeping the congregation informed about its own activities, scheduled events and pastoral concerns.

Additionally, we expect to read about some denominational and inter-denominational matters of interest to us. Finally, just as your policy suggests, there are some community events that also find their way into the bulletin. For example, our own bulletin has contained requests from the local food bank and a second-stage housing development, as well as notice of various Christmas concerts by local choirs.

If we knew why your council felt the need to write this policy we might be more sympathetic. Perhaps they should have shared the dilemma which prompted them to write this "law." As it stands, it comes across as an officious and somewhat defensive statement written in a style that may inhibit the very closeness and sense of community that a bulletin should promote.

Write to: Peter and Marja Slofsrta, 16 Kimberrmount Drive, St. Catharines, ON, L2N 5V6

Peter and Marja Slofsrta are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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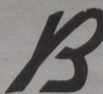
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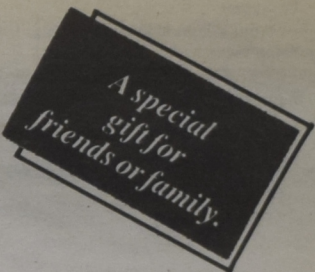
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	Thank You EISING: Trudy and Ralph Eising in Orillia, Ont., want to thank everyone for the flowers, cards and all good wishes on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary.	1950 December 28 1995 It is with great joy that we announce the 45th wedding anniversary of HANK and FEMMY LUIES (VAN DORSTEN) We are very thankful that God has blessed them with 45 years of married life. We thank them for their love and guidance and wish them good health and happiness in the years to come. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren. Henry & Lori Luimes — Calgary, Alta. Courtney, Britney, Lindsey Don & Winnifred Reeves — Brampton, Ont. Jonathan, Daniel, Rebekah Stephen & Marg Sheils — Brampton, Ont. Marc, Jacquelyn, Katelyn John & Sandy Luimes — Brampton, Ont. Nicole, Stephanie Stephen & Ann Blom — Brampton, Ont. Nathan We invite you to share with us in celebrating this special event at an open house on Saturday, Dec. 30, 1995, from 2-4 p.m., in the Library at John Knox Chr. School, 82 McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, Ont. Best wishes only please. Home address: 14 Guest St., Brampton, ON L6W 1T8	Abbotsford December 23 1995 Calgary We, the children and grandchildren of WIEBE and HENNIE WAGENAAR (KAMPMAN) take the opportunity of their 40th anniversary, to give thanks to our heavenly Father for His gift of our parents. "Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths..." (Ps. 25:4). John Rita & Marcel Chris Albert & Karen Mandy, Robyn Rob & Sonya Jaron, Justin Jennifer Address: 416-38th St. S.W., Calgary, AB T3C 1T1	
	Christmas Greetings DE RIJK: To all my family and friends a blessed Christmas and a very happy, healthy 1996. May God bless you all! This is the wish from An de Rijk.	Forest, Ont. Samia, Ont. 1955 December 16 1995 With thankfulness to God, we can celebrate the 40th anniversary of our parents and grandparents HALBE and MARGARET TAEKEMA (nee BYDELEY) We hope and pray for God's continued guidance and blessings in your life together. Love and best wishes from: Annette & Wybe Zylstra — Samia, Ont. Shannon, Sean Henry & Sylvia Taekema — Essex, Ont. Christina, Sarah, Michelle, Daniel, Andrea in heaven Bill Taekema — Brampton, Ont. Address: 1723 Willowbrook Cres., Samia, ON N7S 5P3	For Rent House for rent in Niagara Falls, Ont. Two bedrooms, 1 1/2 storey. \$650 per month, first and last. Does not include utilities. For more information please call (905) 358-9150 or (905) 358-7200	
Job Opportunities Herdsmen/manager wanted. 44 tie stall barn. Some field work necessary. Call (613) 398-6956	PASMA: We wish all our relatives, friends and acquaintances a joyous and blessed Christmas and also a happy New Year. George and Alice Pasma, 263 Clark Rd., London, ON N5W 5E7.			
Share your family news with the rest of us. Place an ad in C.C.	VAN MARRUM: To my children and grandchildren and all my friends a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. From Gerlof Van Marrum.			

Classifieds

Personal	Teachers	For Sale	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous
<p>van de STOUWE, Kars, born July 27, 1930 in Alphen aan de Rijn.</p> <p>TRUPP-PREGEL, Carla Fernanda, born January 7, 1926, emigrated to Canada: September 15, 1956.</p> <p>TERPSTRA, Greetje, born February 15, 1941 in Amsterdam, emigrated to Canada: 1952</p> <p>WEENINK, Theodora Wilhelmina Maria, born January 9, 1926 in Vinkeveen.</p> <p>ZEGERS, Hendrika, born November 27, 1935</p> <p>CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS 1 DUNDAS STREET W., SUITE 2106 TORONTO, ONTARIO M5G 1Z3 TEL. (416) 598-2520</p>	<p>BOWMANVILLE, ONT.: Knox Christian school invites applications for a grade 6 teaching position commencing possibly January 8, 1996 or May 1, 1996. Interested, qualified applicants should submit letter of application, references, and resume as soon as possible to:</p> <p>Bill Helmus, Principal Knox Christian School 410 Scugog St., R.R. 1, Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K2 School: (905) 623-5871 Home: (905) 623-6952 Fax: (905) 623-8877</p> <p>Agassiz, BC: Agassiz Chr. School has 1 maternity leave position for Grade 3, available beginning mid February 1996-June 1996. As well there is a leave of absence opening for an elementary teacher position for the 1996/97 school year. Other positions possibly available as well. Please send resumes to:</p> <p>H. Tuininga Agassiz Chr. School P.O. Box 3230, Agassiz, BC V0M 1A0</p>	<p>personalized DUTCH DELFT BLUE style wall plaques</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none">• birth • graduation• Dutch roots story• wedding (anniversary)• immigrant ships <p>ask for catalogue publishers of the Windmill your Dutch-English bi-weekly P.O. Box 313, Lynden, WA 98264 P.O. Bag 9033, Surrey, BC V3T 4X3 (604) 532-1733 fax (604) 532-1734</p>	<p>Don't Forget...</p> <p><i>It's time to extend Christmas and/or New Year's greetings through C.C.</i></p> <p>Starting with the Christmas issue (December 8), and continuing with the December 15 and 22 issues, we plan to reserve a special section in the classified pages for your season's greetings. Deadline for the Christmas issue is November 29! Kindly formulate your greetings to family and friends now (the message should not exceed 40 words) and send it in today, enclosing payment of \$20.00 as well.</p> <p><i>Forget the fuss of cards and postage stamps; one ad does it all!</i></p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Road, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Fax your message to us! Our fax number is: (905) 682-8313</p>	<p>WHY NOT?</p> <p>The Christian Marriage Contact Service assists men and women in the USA and Canada who would like to marry or remarry.</p> <p>Why not write to us at C.M.C.S.? Enclose \$5.00 for our information package. P.O. Box 93090 Burlington, Ontario, Canada L7M 4A3</p> <p>More male members are encouraged to apply.</p>
<p>ONE TO ANOTHER</p> <p>Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5.</p> <p>Write to: #302, 1502-2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2</p>	<p>Dutch Canadian lady, early fifties, southern Ontario, enjoys theatre, concerts, spending quality time at home, would like to meet Christian gentleman with similar interests. Please write to: File #2637, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.</p>	<p>Job Opportunities</p> <p>Director of Congregational Life and Youth</p> <p>The Chr. Ref. Church, Aylmer, Ont., is seeking applicants for a full-time associate pastor (ordained or lay person). Job description and brief profile of our congregation available upon request. Send letters of inquiry to Ed Weesjes, R.R. #3, St. Thomas, ON N5P 3S7. Phone (519) 631-6004.</p>	  <p>All the Way to Bethlehem Joyful Noise Children's Choir Voce Humana with Ken Medema</p> <p>To purchase your own copy of "ALL THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM," please write to Rehoboth Christian Ministries, #104, 5013-48 Street, Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1L8, or call us at (403) 963-4044 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (mst).</p> <p>Compact Discs - \$17 + \$3.50 shipping/handling _____ x \$17 + \$3.50 = _____ Cassettes - \$12 + \$3.50 shipping/handling _____ x \$12 + \$3.50 = _____ Total amount enclosed = \$ _____</p> <p>All proceeds in support of Rehoboth Christian Ministries, a Christian Association for the Mentally Handicapped of Alberta.</p>	

<p>Christian Courier</p> <p>Give someone a gift subscription and we will send them a card informing them of your thoughtfulness and new subscription!</p>  <p>Please start the following gift subscription today at \$30.00 for 12 months (44 issues)</p> <p>Name _____ Address _____ City/Town _____ Code _____</p> <p>This gift is from:</p> <p>Name _____ Address _____ City/Town _____ Code _____</p> <p>Cheque for \$30 must be enclosed.</p> <p>This offer applies only to those who were never subscribers of <i>Christian Courier</i> or whose subscription lapsed more than a year ago. (Valid until December 31, 1995).</p>

Classifieds

Events

Events

Events

Events

Events

45th Anniversary

The Orangeville Christian Reformed Church,
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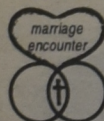
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"Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

- Dec. 13-20** Christmas concerts by the Ont. Chr. Music Assembly, directed by Leendert Kooy, with Andre Knevel at the organ. All events start at 8 p.m. **Dec. 13:** Maranatha CRC, **Bowmanville, Ont.**; **Dec. 16:** Willowdale United Church, **Willowdale, Ont.**; **Dec. 20:** Melrose United Church, **Hamilton, Ont.** Info.: OCMA (416) 636-9779.
- Dec. 14** Watch Vision TV at 10:30 p.m.: Gerald Vandezande, CPJ's public affairs director, is the subject of a TV biography, a Vision TV special!
- Dec. 16** Christmas concert by the "Pro-Musica Choir" (Ian Sadler, conductor), 8 p.m., Can. Ref. Church, **Burlington, Ont.** Info./tickets (905) 632-1347.
- Dec. 17-22** Annual candlelight services with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir" (John Hunse, director). **Dec. 17:** 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **York, Ont.**; **Dec. 22:** 8 p.m., Mount Hamilton CRC, **Hamilton, Ont.**
- Dec. 17** Dutch worship service, led by Rev. Henry R. De Bolster, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster, Ont.**
- Dec. 22:** Christmas concert with the Christian choir "New Life" and the "Garden City Christian Male Chorus," 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **St. Catharines, Ont.**
- Dec. 27** The "Annual John Knox Chr. School Hockey Tournament," 7:30 a.m., Double Rink Arenas (Jane St., just south of Hwy. 7), **Woodbridge, Ont.** Info.: Gary Maas (905) 455-1886.
- Dec. 28-29:** "Alleluia - '95" concerts by "The Ambassadors" with Stephanie Numan, violin. **Dec. 28:** 8 p.m., Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby, Ont.**; **Dec. 29:** First CRC, **Hamilton, Ont.** Info.: (416) 389-2104.

Christmas in Holland

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Aboriginals have major stake

Canada's Aboriginal peoples have a major stake in social security reform in Canada:

- An unemployment rate that is double the Canadian average;
- Almost half of all Aboriginal adults have an annual income of less than \$10,000;
- In 1990, more than 40 percent of on-reserve Registered Indians and 57 percent of those off reserves were on social assistance compared to seven percent of the rest of the population; and
- The Aboriginal population is very young: its birth rate is twice the Canadian average.

NC

Joseph has a message for all fathers

In the Dec. 11 Christianity Today Walter Wangerin, Jr., has written an unusual and insightful article about Joseph (Jesus' earthly father) and parenthood called "A Stranger in Joseph's House." Wangerin and his wife are adoptive parents and that gives him a special empathy for Joseph, he feels.

"Now Joseph was a righteous man.... The more I think of this man in whom meekness was a strength, the more I honor him. Unlike Zechariah, he was not mute. Yet the Bible records no word spoken by Joseph. Most folks involved in the events of the Nativity talked. They sang and chattered and expostulated. Everyone: kings, priests, scribes, relatives, neighbors. Even the shepherds. But not Joseph. He didn't talk. He obeyed. Silently and steadfastly, he acted. He served.

"Yet the man was no one's puppet. And his heart was kind. Joseph chose to temper righteousness with tenderness. Whether the law accused her or not, he would never put Mary to shame. Nor would he leave her behind when he, as head of the household, went to the City of David to be enrolled. And when in Bethlehem a babe was born

which was not his own, in whose face he would never find his own image, Joseph kindly, righteously adopted it.

"Joseph is the patron saint of the fathers of families. Perhaps he ought to stand model for all parents, because the ghostly unknown that hovered behind his adopted son — the Begetter of *this* boy, in whose features was the First Father's image — is also the Father of every child ever born in the world. And God's heavenly parenthood makes all mothers and fathers the adopters of their children.

"But I feel a particular friendship for Joseph. Our fatherhoods are so similar that I cannot but learn from his plain response to the glorious task of raising the Son of Another: faith, obedience, tenderness, and finally release. The child was his but a little while...."

(Wangerin then describes

Church press

Jacob Kuntz

driving by the town where the birth parents of his daughter, Talitha, lived; she wants to look for them)

"Such a moment, I believe, also occurred for Joseph. Jesus never challenged his authority the way Talitha did ours. Luke says he 'was obedient to' his parents. Yet, there were intimacies in which this adoptive father could not participate. For he likely would sit at a Passover meal and look into his son's face and find there absolutely no characteristic of his own.

"Mary's eye's, perhaps; the curve of *her* jaw; he could see a mother-son relationship, but he could only watch. It was a parenthood beyond his reach.

"Someone else dwelt in his son's face. Another source governed the boy's behavior. Indistinct, completely different, strange to this father, a ghost in the household....

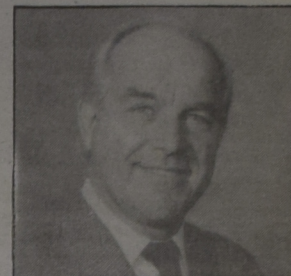
"Training up the child of one's own loins has a deep spiritual and genetic ap-

propriateness. One doesn't question one's right and the instinctive rightness of one's methods. Communication is as deep as the chromosomes. Thanne [Wangerin's wife] and I have raised children born to us as well as children adopted, and we've experienced the difference. In order to train up the adopted child, one must also learn *her* language, since communication begins at the surface of things.

"One must never assume a complete knowledge of this child except as watchfulness and love reveal her. And very early the adoptive parent realizes that the methods of training *this* child must obey a greater source than flesh and natural conception."

"I am speaking for Joseph. He must have trained Jesus with a more conscious loving, a more patient searching of his son in order to learn the character of the stranger placed into his care...."

quotes



"The ghost in Jesus was holy. In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. This is what Joseph by his plain, faithful obedience was granted to see: Immanuel, God with us.

"In all our children's faces is the image of their Creator.

When any parents, by loving God, love their children right; and when, by following God, they lead their children out of the house, into adulthood and the purpose for which they were born, then in that fullness they, too, will find the face of God the Father, who had lent them the children in the first place...."

Christian conservatism vs. political conservatism

In ChristianWeek of October 31, Dr. John Redekop comments on the meaning of "conservative." Is a conservative Christian of necessity also a conservative politically? Or is it possible that a conservative Christian upholds "values and policies which most people would not consider to be conservative?"

To be sure, both forms of conservatism have much in common. But there are also some basic differences, as Dr. Redekop explains:

"Conservative Christians, when true to their creed, are very strong on humanitarian assistance; political conservatives are not: 'Individuals are responsible for their own problems.' Political conservatism, partly because democracy rests on pluralism, does not give central place to the Christian gospel; Christian conservatism does.

"Conservative Christianity stands for selflessness, other-orientatedness, and an honest concern for one's neighbor. Political conservatism often excludes individual and national self-centredness, limited concern for the needy and oppressed, and a willingness to accept gross social and economic inequality.

"In conservative Christianity there is no place for sharp distinctions based on race, ethnicity, sex or economic status. Political conservatism often exhibits substantial acceptance of social distinctions based on these factors.

"Political conservatism makes much of property rights. Conservative Christians also see value in emphasizing property rights, but only as a secondary value. Christians are stewards who ought to hold their property loosely.

"Lastly, political conservatives tend to glorify patriotism and nationalism; one's country seems to constitute the highest good. Conservative Christians see things differently. They give

first earthly allegiance to Christ and his kingdom church, which is ultimately trans-national and therefore all other allegiances must be secondary and conditional.

"I trust that my perplexed friends now understand why I can claim to be a conservative Christian but not automatically, let alone entirely, a political conservative. As the ideological political spectrum in North America moves more and more to the right, making this basic distinction becomes increasingly important."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont., where he works half-time in Holland Christian Homes.

The case against perfume

A group of people from Mennonite churches recently discussed the irritation caused by the use of perfume in worship services. It is a problem that transcends ecclesiastical boundaries, and so we quote part of the article as we found it in the Mennonite Reporter of October 2 — for the benefit of people with "perfume intolerance." And it's not meant as a joke.

"Why do people overuse perfume? Is it to cover up body odors? Has heavy use desensitized them to the scent?"

"Each affected person may experience different distress from exposure to perfume. Verna gets a headache that may result in a migraine; Ruth feels pressure behind her eyes that may develop into a headache. Hedio feels throat irritation, her nose gets itchy, and the inside of her ears itch, 'a most miserable feeling,' she says.

"While these people have various levels of discomfort, none has the degree of distress that Alice speaks of. 'I don't go to church anymore,' she says.

"What is she saying? This former missionary and active church worker could not be turning her back to the church.

"She quickly explains: 'I get violently ill when I come in contact with the scents of various products worshippers use, and there are many: hair sprays, body lotions, after-shaves, soaps, bath salts, deodorants. The effects are like those of an allergy, but doctors often just call it a reaction or a chemical sensitivity.' She tells of nausea, shaky knees, stiff neck, poor coordination, mental fog with loss of short-term memory, loss of eyesight, and insomnia.

News

Laughter best medicine, friends of injured farmer decide

James Kwantes

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. — The Christian community is continuing to come through for the Van Ee family of Abbotsford, British Columbia. A group of teachers from the Christian school where injured hog farmer Everett Van Ee and his wife, Kathy, used to teach organized a fundraising program on the theme of "laughter is the best medicine" — and managed to raise \$3,300 for the troubled family.

More than 550 people packed into the Abbotsford Christian Secondary School gym on Nov. 18 for the variety show benefit organized by teachers from the two elementary and one secondary campuses.

Everett, seriously injured in a Sept. 15 farm accident, is now eating, talking to family members and friends, and moving his arms and legs. During one recent hospital visit by his family, he joined his daughter Charlene and son Ethan in singing the chorus "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

However, a local insurance company has not yet paid the Van Ees a settlement for barns that burned down in a December fire. After the accident



Male teachers join in a chorus of the Beatles' song about aging, "When I'm 64."

landed Everett in the hospital with a coma, bills for the construction of a just-completed hog barn nearly bankrupted the family.

Teachers put their 'talents' to use

In addition to praise songs and a male student quartet, the variety show featured humorous songs, skits and comedy routines that kept the standing-room-only crowd applauding and laughing.

In one skit, current and former students of the school saw their teachers transformed into students with no grasp of history or geography. In response to the teacher's query about the countries of Europe, one of the students yelled "Fryslan!", to laughter and scattered applause from the audience. Another skit featured a group of male teachers, dressed up as old men, entertaining the crowd with a rendition of "When I'm Sixty-Four"

by The Beatles.

"Some of the teachers helped at the farm, but others of us felt our talents could be used in a different way," explained teacher Janet Hitchcock.

Many who attended said Everett Van Ee, an accomplished actor and director who directed a local drama troupe, would have appreciated the event. It was videotaped so he could eventually watch the production.

"Everett would have loved it," said former teacher Ralph Huizinga. "He is a real theatre man." Huizinga said he enjoyed the show and appreciated the student participation.

"It was really encouraging," said Kathy Van Ee of the variety show. "It's unreal when I think about the amount of time they took putting this together."

"The talent was excellent. Knowing teachers, they probably just started practising the week before," she laughed. Van Ee said she was also encouraged to see Christians from so many different backgrounds working together to make the evening a success.

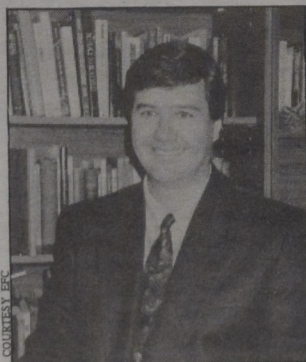
The proceeds will help pay outstanding farm bills.

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada plans for stronger presence in Ottawa

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — In order to have a more effective presence and influence in Ottawa, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) will be opening a national affairs office there early in 1996. Bruce Clemenger, EFC's public affairs director, will be based at the new office, along with an assistant.

Clemenger, who up till now has worked at EFC's headquarters in Markham, Ont., has been travelling to Ottawa at least once a month in the past year. One reason for the new office is "we want to have a more consistent presence in Ottawa, so people here begin to understand who we are," says Clemenger. EFC also wants to become more pro-active in Ottawa and wants to respond quickly to developments there. Having an office in Ottawa will enable Clemenger to make con-



Bruce Clemenger

tacts with politicians of all parties, to find out about legislation at an early stage and to make recommendations.

Clemenger says he wants EFC "to become more a part of dialogue and discussions" in Ottawa.

Clemenger stresses that EFC is non-partisan. "Our voting

patterns as evangelicals are parallel to the nation's," he comments. "We're not driven by one political agenda over another." EFC is "not at all an alternative to a Christian political party."

A progression

Opening an office in Ottawa is part of a progression for EFC, says Clemenger. Other Christian organizations like the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which EFC periodically works with, already have offices in Ottawa, he notes.

EFC's work in Ottawa will be somewhat similar to that of Citizens for Public Justice, except that "we have a broader spectrum of issues we deal with," Clemenger asserts. Some of EFC's strategies will be similar to those of CPJ. Clemenger adds that Gerald Vandezande, CPJ's public af-

fairs director, helps to lead some coalitions in which EFC has been involved.

EFC plans to make more submissions to government than it does now about a wide range of issues. Recently, EFC has been addressing topics such as euthanasia, violence on television and reproductive technologies. Future issues EFC may confront are how to respond to poverty, and freedom of speech and conscience in relation to hate literature. EFC also plans to set up a religious liberties commission and a tracking system in Ottawa to follow major issues.

Clemenger says, "Organizationally, my position is the same." A part-time assistant has been hired to do some of Clemenger's work at EFC's main office. There has been much prayer behind the decision to open an office in Ottawa, concludes Clemenger.

News Digest

Poor women better risks

TORONTO — According to banker Mohammed Yunus, poor women are better credit risks than rich men.

A Canadian Press report says that the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which Yunus founded and leads, has \$300 million in loans and boasts a 98 per cent recovery rate, despite operating in one of the poorest countries in the world. The recovery rate is much better than when lending to the Reichmanns.

Grameen Bank has two million customers, 94 per cent of whom are women with average loans of \$140. In a culture where women traditionally never handle the family money, Yunus deliberately focuses on them as agents of change.

The women need a lot of confidence building before they will get involved. The first \$10 or \$15 loan often builds up tremendous resentment from husbands. But Grameen is no charity. It charges 20 per cent a year, the going rate in inflationary Bangladesh, and insists the loan be paid off in a year.

Space technology fuels buses

CHICAGO — Next year the city of Chicago will begin using three prototype buses powered by fuel cells of a type abandoned after NASA's Gemini space program but resurrected by a Canadian engineering firm, reports the *Guardian Weekly*.

Ballard Power Systems of Vancouver has developed the PEM or proton exchange membrane which consists of a "solid" electrolyte (sulfuric acid bonded to Teflon) with a carbon cathode and anode, each containing a platinum catalyst on the inside. The only by-product of the fuel cells is water vapor; and they are noiseless.

The prototype buses can be "refueled" at a central point in 11 minutes (as opposed to hours). Ballard says its experience in Chicago could be crucial. By 1998 it expects to have such buses commercially available, and by 2003 the fuel cells should be available in cars.